

## HR 4073: Incline Legislation

April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2012

NPFPL Subcommittee Hearing

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Today, I am happy to speak in support of my legislation, HR 4073, a bill to authorize the Secretary of Agriculture to accept the quitclaim, disclaimer, and relinquishment of a railroad right of way within the Pike National Forest in my district.

Originally granted to the Mt. Manitou Park and Incline Railway Company, the Incline Trail exists today as the roadbed to the former Mount Manitou Scenic Incline Railway which was a cable car that took people up the eastern face of Rocky Mountain at an average grade of 40 percent with some of the steepest sections at a grade of 68 percent. Today, it has become a popular hike for outdoor adventure-seekers in the Pikes Peak region and is said to be hiked nearly half a million times each year though access is considered trespassing.

A citizens' initiative began over 8 years ago to encourage making access to this popular trail legal. Although all parties are amenable, due

to an Act dated on March 3, 1875, the Forest Service has been unable to accept the quitclaim from the Manitou and Pikes Peak Railway.

Recognizing this problem, the railway company came to me and asked that I carry this legislation to allow the Forest Service the authority to accept the quitclaim, which is the last major hurdle in allowing the Incline Trail to be legally opened for public use.

Although several people have informally maintained the Incline, no formal steps have been taken by any of the property owners to maintain the Incline since 1997. Legalizing access to the trail will allow the surrounding communities access to repair sections of the trail that are in poor condition and will make use safer for all hikers.

It has been my pleasure to work with the interested parties in helping to gain legal access to this unique trail that I believe will be a wonderful addition to the region's trail inventory. I would like to thank the Forest Service for their diligence in working with my office in this process. Also, I have letters of support from the Colorado Springs City

Council, the Mayor of Colorado Springs, the Mayor and City Council of the City of Manitou Springs, and the Manitou and Pikes Peak Railway Company that I would like to submit for the record at this time.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I yield back my time.

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